



## Practice Guidance

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### QUICK TIPS FOR ADVOCATING FOR EXPANDING YOUR ROLE AS A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

As a school psychologist, psychoeducational assessment is a defining part of our job. Spending time with a student one-on-one to understand their unique learning profile is rewarding and important. Many of us, however, yearn for an expanded role within our buildings and districts. Exciting opportunities such as providing individual and group counseling, supporting school wide behavioral and social-emotional learning interventions, and helping to improve academic instruction and intervention are some of the many opportunities available to school psychologists.

Our expertise in data analysis, ability to read and interpret educational research, and understanding of systemic change make us valuable members of any school improvement project. Despite these critical skills, many school psychologists find themselves left out of opportunities and struggling to grow into new areas. Below are some quick tips for when, as a school psychologist, you are ready to pursue an expanded role. Many additional resources are available at [www.nasponline.org](http://www.nasponline.org).

Quick Tips for Advocating for an Expanded Role:

1. Decide on your personal goals
2. Ask to attend an existing meeting instead of arranging a new one
3. Remember that anecdotes can be as powerful as data
4. Request a specific change when meeting with administrators
5. Have materials ready to hand out
6. Follow-up by email with an action plan

**Deciding on your personal goals** is critical before pursuing an expanded role. Are you looking to use an expertise you have but isn't part of your current routine, are you looking to grow a new skill, are you frustrated by a roadblock to student progress, are you burned out and looking for a change to rediscover your professional excitement, something else? Many more opportunities exist in education than any one professional can accomplish. Recognizing your own professional motivations is important for guiding your growth.

**Asking to attend an existing meeting** instead of arranging a new one with administrator is a simple but powerful strategy. Many meetings already take place every week in education. Ask to be part of the agenda for an existing meeting to propose your ideas, or simply ask to start attending a meeting on a topic of interest.

**Anecdotes can be as powerful as data**, and often more powerful, when you are working towards systems change. If your audience is not as ready as you are for your desired change, flooding them with data will often not lead to shared understanding. Strong anecdotes that highlight your concern and suggest your proposed change are often the best way to develop that shared understanding. This can be hard for school psychologists who tend to rely heavily on data. Remember that research has shown that presenting data that conflicts with someone's perspective can counterproductively lead to a strengthening of their existing belief.

**Requesting a specific change** when meeting with administrators both helps you know if your advocacy is working and clarifies your goals for others. Avoid meetings where the discussion simply highlights a problem without a proposed solution. Be mindful, however, of the readiness for change among those with whom you are speaking. If your audience does not share your goals and/or has a different definition of the problem, your request may need to simply be a continued shared conversation. Revisit your specific request towards the end of the meeting and leave with a specific plan.

**Having materials ready to hand out** can help your audience understand and retain your message. NASP provides many great materials, including information on who are school psychologists, the NASP Practice Model, and other similar information. Example materials and success stories are also powerful handouts.

**Following up by email after a conversation** helps clarify your requests, provide electronic versions of any handouts, and specify steps you will take and that others agreed to take. By clarifying follow-up steps during the meeting and reinforcing them in an email, you can establish a clear record of the conversation, create an opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings, and provide yourself a clear mechanism to continue the conversation. Listing your own to-dos also demonstrates your accountability and investment in the change you seek.

Advocating for an expanded role in our building and districts can be both exciting and nerve wracking. Having clear goals and approaching the change methodically can ease your nerves and help keep you on track. Don't rush the process, be systematic, and remember that every professional has their own perspective. Find a shared understanding, be clear in your goals, and be persistent!